

correct, educational and discreet in avoidance of solicitation of patients or exploitation of individuals. The interests of the public health and the increasing demands of the general public for information render it of the highest importance that the code of medical ethics be not interpreted as to hamper properly worded and rightfully motivated publicity.

AN ANNUAL REPORT AND ROMANCE

ANNUAL reports are usually synonymous with boredom. If their subject matter is intrinsically interesting, its treatment frequently dampens the reader's enthusiasm. The appearance of a report which compares more than favorably with an attractive romantic novel therefore deserves special comment. Of all the topics ordinarily uninteresting to the reader, a water supply report is often the dullest, excepting to the enthusiastic technical worker.

Sir Alexander Houston, in the *22d Annual Report of the Metropolitan Water Board of London, for 1927*, escapes the deadening influence of precedent by announcing in the beginning of his report:

All water supplies in their origin are exquisitely romantic. Water evaporates from the ocean and condenses to form clouds. The clouds burst, and millions of drops of rain, the jewels of heaven, fall on the mountains and hills and valleys to give us our springs, lakes, rivers and subterranean sources of supply. . . . If you love the beauties of nature, simple things like the flow of water from a tap can carry you in imagination to the uttermost ends of the earth; the skies, the oceans and the mountains will be yours; and, if you pause nearer home in your flight, the kindly hills and peaceful valleys, which nurse the water supplies to the great metropolis, will surely gain an intimate place in your hearts.

Having thus deliberately escaped from the necessity of presenting his findings in the usual humdrum form and language of annual reports, Sir Alexander then carries his reader through some 80 pages of delightful comment upon water supply problems. And the strange feature of the report is that it contains valuable technical information so frequently and successfully disguised that even a layman might read it from cover to cover.

The report is liberally illustrated with photographs, the effectiveness of which would do justice to any limited edition of our current works of art. Even Sir Alexander, however, feels that he must make apology for producing an entertaining, albeit valuable, annual report. In his review of the upland sources of water supply for the City of London, he graces the pages with such comments as:

Then we reach Harpenden, perhaps the sweetest name in all England, for it means "the valley of nightingales." Miss Ellen Terry, one of the most charming and talented actresses the English stage has ever known, lived for some years at Harpenden. Nearby is the celebrated experimental agricultural station of Rothamsted, whose fame extends throughout the civilised globe. In far distant days, about a mile north, on the borders of the two counties (Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire) many prize fights were fought.

On the same page, however, he apologizes that—

This, however, is a treatise on water supply and some persons dwell in water-tight compartments. The Philistines welcome no digressions; they see only the open road straight in front of them. Perhaps they are right in ignoring all matters not wholly relevant. Others look to the beginning and end of things, the alluring surroundings of a subject, the association of ideas, the belief that there is nothing under the sun which is not related, in greater or less degree, to a thousand other things, which to unseeing eyes may seem to be irrelevant. These are the hill-top worshippers who regard everything in life as wonderful, and who, rightly or wrongly, fail to see why even questions of water supply should be ruthlessly shorn of all the elements of romance, and be regarded wholly and without sentiment as a matter of quantity, quality and financial expediency.

Space is not available to discuss at any greater length the technical matters of importance in this report, but the reader we hope will be allured by the prospectuses so briefly noted above, to review it in its entirety as a beacon light in the dull field of gray-backed annual reports.

PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING SECTION— SCOPE AND POLICY

ATTENTION is directed to the report of the Committee on Scope and Policy of the Public Health Engineering Section published elsewhere in this issue* of the JOURNAL. The duties and responsibilities of the engineering group to the public health profession are clearly stated, the delineation of policies is clean-cut, and worthy of much consideration by other specialized groups of public health workers. Nurses, hygienists, publicists, educators, and laboratory workers all have much the same relationship to the public health field and other branches of their profession as is defined for the engineers in this report. Far-sighted policies of this nature, developed on a carefully planned program, will mean much to the public health profession.

* See page 677.